United Nations S/2017/1071

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 December 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 12 December 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013), 2183 (2014), 2247 (2015) and 2315 (2016), I have the honour to convey the attached letters dated 24 March and 24 November 2017 from the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, transmitting the forty-third and forty-fourth reports on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see annexes I and II). The reports cover the periods from 1 March to 31 August 2016 and from 1 September 2016 to 31 March 2017, respectively.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annexes to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

17-23221 (E) 030118

Please recycle

Annex I

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013), 2183 (2014) and 2247 (2015), please find enclosed the forty-third report on operation Althea to the Security Council (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Federica **Mogherini**

Enclosure

Report of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 March to 31 August 2016.

2. The Security Council, in its resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013), 2183 (2014) and 2247 (2015), requests that Member States, acting through or in cooperation with the European Union, report to the Council on the activities of the European Union Force (EUFOR) at least at six-monthly intervals. This is the forty-third such report.

II. Political background

3. During the reporting period, the overall political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been marked by efforts to progress towards European Union integration. Since its application for European Union membership in February 2016, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made progress on its reform path towards the European Union, including meaningful progress on the implementation of the reform agenda, the initialling of the stabilization and association agreement adaptation protocol and the adoption of a coordination mechanism on European Union matters. The implementation of the reform agenda, an ambitious set of socioeconomic, rule of law and public administration reforms, has opened the prospect of a better socioeconomic situation for the citizens. The agreed coordination mechanism on European Union matters has been created to improve the functionality of the country in its relations with the European Union.

4. However, polarizing issues continued to burden the political agenda, and undue political interference and exacerbated ethnocentric politics and rhetoric on all sides endangered at times the political consensus on the necessary reforms.

5. The census results were published on 30 June 2016. However, the Republika Srpska entity government declared this census illegal. On 15 July, the Republika Srpska national assembly adopted a decision to hold an entity-wide referendum on 25 September 2016 on the question whether 9 January should be celebrated as a Republika Srpska holiday, which was cause for serious concern. The Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in November 2015, had declared the marking of the Republika Srpska day on 9 January as unconstitutional, on the grounds that it discriminates against non-Serbs. In Mostar, an agreement on amendments to the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina that would implement the Constitutional Court ruling of 2011 on Mostar and ensure the holding of elections in the city in October for the first time in eight years could not be reached.

6. Bosnia and Herzegovina's delicate relations with its neighbours continued to develop positively. The regional environment was relatively favourable, and several events of relevance took place, such as the Mostar business fair in April, the Sarajevo business forum in May, the Brdo-Brijuni summit and the ministerial meeting of the Central European Initiative in June.

7. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina head to the polls on 2 October 2016 for municipal elections. Political parties have been in active campaign mode for months,

engaging in divisive verbal attacks on political opponents. In the coming months, reform efforts should be maintained, in particular to address the difficult socioeconomic situation. Bosnia and Herzegovina should enhance its constructive regional role and be ready to face regional and global challenges.

III. Security situation and EUFOR activities

8. The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, overall, calm and stable, and the reporting period saw no threat to the safe and secure environment, yet stability has not been entrenched owing to several remaining internal and external factors of concern.

9. As one of its main objectives, operation Althea continued to implement its capacity-building and training tasks according to its mandate, while engaging in a more integrated approach with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through a harmonized approach in that area. Under Berlin Plus, the cooperation with NATO continued to be strengthened at all levels in order to support the agenda and professionalization efforts of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

10. The operation is well configured to deliver its main efforts, but continued political obstacles and shortfalls on the side of the armed forces, as well as a large amount of resources dedicated to guarding and managing an obsolete surplus of weapons and ammunition, still need to be fully addressed for the armed forces to entirely benefit from the capacity-building and training offer, in coordination with other international partners on the ground.

11. The EUFOR Althea headquarters stood ready to support the efforts of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain the safe and secure environment. The presence of EUFOR on the ground, including through its liaison and observation teams, remains an important contribution to stability and security.

12. Some improvements were made with regard to the capacities of the law enforcement agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while structural and tactical challenges and shortfalls also remain. In particular, command and control at the strategic and operational levels remain weak and the law enforcement agencies remain fragmented, uncoordinated and vulnerable to political manipulation and obstruction, yet they were able to maintain the safe and secure environment. No incidents posing a threat to the safe and secure environment were registered during the reporting period.

13. The armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina managed to increase the disposal rate of ammunition, weapons and explosives surplus and make progress in inventory, partly thanks to the support provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and other partners in the international community. Demining activities have gained a new momentum since the decision to reconstitute the board of donors in May 2015.

IV. Outlook

14. The Council of the European Union has acknowledged that Bosnia and Herzegovina has delivered on the conditionality it set for considering the country's European Union membership application, which led, on 20 September 2016, to an invitation to the European Commission to submit an opinion on the merits of the application. The positive momentum on the European Union path in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the progress achieved so far have reduced the stalemate that the country had been facing in the past years. The reform agenda needs to be implemented

in order to meet the targets set for 2018 for economic, rule of law and public administration issues. The reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and within the region must also remain a priority. In that context, increasing disruptive secessionist rhetoric remains a concern, since it affects the ongoing reform efforts and threatens to undermine stability and progress in the country.

15. The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, overall, calm and stable during the reporting period, yet stability has not been entrenched. Some actions were taken by the political leadership to address the socioeconomic problems. However, the dire socioeconomic situation and its root causes remained a prime factor of concern requiring effective and sustained reform efforts. Moreover, global challenges, such as radicalization, the return of foreign terrorist fighters and foreign political and financial interference, may in the future put additional pressure on the security environment and on the law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the capacities of the law enforcement agencies need to be further improved by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

16. While important challenges remain, the renewed approach by the European Union should be seized to retain a positive political momentum.

Annex II

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013), 2183 (2014), 2247 (2015) and 2315 (2016), please find enclosed the forty-fourth report on operation Althea to the Security Council (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Federica **Mogherini**

Enclosure

Report of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 September 2016 to 31 March 2017.

2. The Security Council, in its resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013), 2183 (2014), 2247 (2015) and 2315 (2016), requests that Member States, acting through or in cooperation with the European Union, report to the Council on the activities of the European Union Force (EUFOR) at least at six-monthly intervals. This is the forty-fourth such report.

II. Political background

3. During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina has demonstrated progress on the reform path towards the European Union. Following Bosnia and Herzegovina's application in February 2016 for European Union membership, on 20 September 2016 the Council of the European Union asked the European Commission to prepare an opinion on the application. In December 2016, as part of the opinion's preparation process, the Commissioner, Johannes Hahn, handed over a comprehensive questionnaire aimed at assessing the state of play and readiness of the country to move forward towards the European Union with more than 3,000 questions to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The authorities began working on the answers. The submission of consolidated and harmonized answers to the European Commission would be a test of how effectively the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina at all levels can cooperate, notably in the framework of the coordination mechanism on European Union matters.

4. The reform agenda agreed between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina switched the focus to measures allowing the country to move towards a more open and productive economy. While Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted and implemented several measures of the reform agenda halfway through a three-year programme, reforms are increasingly being held hostage by political vested interests and in-fighting, despite the responsibility for the common vision demanded by its citizens.

5. The initiative to reopen a case against Serbia at the International Court of Justice, the referendum in the Republika Srpska entity on a public holiday and the context in which the celebration of this holiday on 9 January 2017 took place, as well as further divisive rhetoric from political leaders, risked putting in jeopardy the necessary focus on socioeconomic, rule of law and public administration reforms. Investigations and other legal procedures related to these events were initiated.

6. Local elections took place throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina on 2 October 2016 with a turnout of 53.88 per cent, organized broadly in an orderly manner, despite incidents. In Stolac, where elections had been suspended owing to an incident of violence, repeated local elections were successfully held on 19 February 2017, with a strong presence of domestic and international observers. Despite efforts to resolve the disagreements over the election rules in Mostar, again elections could not take place there in 2016. The ruling in December 2016 by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina requiring amendments to the Election Law with regard to

the Federation House of Peoples also remains to be implemented, as well as a number of other court decisions.

7. Despite the attempted revision before the International Court of Justice against Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina's delicate relations with its neighbours continued to progress. Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to participate actively in regional initiatives. It took over the chairmanship of the Central European Initiative in January 2016, and the Central European Initiative summit was held in Sarajevo in December 2016. Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted the Western Balkans 6 summit in Sarajevo in March 2017, a first for the region.

III. Security situation and EUFOR activities

8. The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, overall, calm and stable, and the reporting period saw no threat to the safe and secure environment, yet stability has not been entrenched owing to several remaining internal and external factors of concern.

9. As one of its main objectives, operation Althea continued to implement its capacity-building and training tasks according to its mandate, while engaging in a more integrated approach with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through a harmonized approach in that area. Under Berlin Plus, the cooperation with NATO continued to be strengthened at all levels in order to support the agenda and professionalization efforts of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The operation is well configured to deliver its main efforts, but continued political obstacles and shortfalls on the side of the armed forces, as well as a large amount of resources dedicated to guarding and managing an obsolete surplus of weapons and ammunition, still need to be fully addressed for the armed forces to entirely benefit from the capacity-building and training offer, in coordination with other international partners on the ground.

10. The EUFOR Althea headquarters stood ready to support the efforts of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain the safe and secure environment. EUFOR has, including through its liaison and observation teams, remained an important contribution to stability and security.

11. Some improvements were made with regard to the capacities of the law enforcement agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while structural and tactical challenges and shortfalls also remain. In particular, command and control at the strategic and operational levels remain weak, and the law enforcement agencies remain fragmented, uncoordinated and vulnerable to political manipulation and obstruction, yet they were able to maintain the safe and secure environment. No incidents posing a threat to the safe and secure environment were registered during the reporting period.

12. The armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina managed to increase the disposal rate of ammunition, weapons and explosives surplus and make progress in inventory, partly thanks to the support provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and other partners in the international community. Demining activities have gained a new momentum since the decision to reconstitute the board of donors in May 2015.

IV. Outlook

13. The Council of the European Union has acknowledged that Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved meaningful progress towards the implementation of the

reform agenda and invited, on 20 September 2016, the Commission to submit an opinion on the merits of Bosnia and Herzegovina's application. The positive momentum on the European Union path in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the progress achieved so far need to continue, and the country's political leaders should refrain from divisive initiatives. The reform agenda needs to be implemented in order to meet the targets set for 2018 for economic, rule of law and public administration issues. Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and within the region must also remain a priority. In that context, increasing disruptive, divisive and secessionist rhetoric remains a concern, since it affects the ongoing reform efforts and threatens to undermine stability and progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

14. The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, overall, calm and stable during the reporting period, yet stability has not been entrenched. Further actions were taken by the political leadership to address the socioeconomic problems. However, the dire socioeconomic situation and its root causes remained a prime factor of concern, requiring effective and sustained reform efforts. Moreover, global challenges, including those of a hybrid nature, such as radicalization, the return of foreign terrorist fighters and irregular migration, as well as foreign political and financial interference, may in the future put additional pressure on the security environment and on the law enforcement authorities. Therefore, the capacities of the law enforcement authorities, hampered by insufficient coordination and vulnerability to political manipulation, need to be further improved by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

15. While important challenges remain, the renewed approach by the European Union brought several encouraging initial results in the past two years.